

Realization of Sustainable Development Goals and Energy Security through Ecopoetry

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CITATION

Basu, P. (2026). Realization of Sustainable Development Goals and Energy Security through Ecopoetry *Shodh Manjusha: An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 03(01), 56–63. <https://doi.org/10.70388/sm250189>

Article Info

Received: Oct 21, 2025

Accepted: Nov 23, 2025

Published: Jan 05, 2026

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<https://doi.org/10.70388/sm250189>

ABSTRACT

The welfare of human beings is directly linked to the health of the planet Earth. So, they have a responsibility towards her. They must direct their actions towards protecting and preserving the planet and her natural resources. The development needs of the present generation should be met in such a manner that it does not compromise the needs of future generations. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) talk about this. The ever-increasing demand for energy caused by economic expansion, population growth, new energy usage and growth in income has made Energy Security a pressing concern. That is why countries of the world have made it a goal that their economies function without disruptions in energy supply for the people. They are also thinking about and opting for alternative renewable energy sources for this purpose so as to reduce overdependence on energy sources like fossil fuels. Global consciousness is required among people about these issues. Literature can play a crucial role in this case by raising global awareness and fostering sensitivity. Ecopoetry is a form of poetry that explores the relationship between humans and the natural world, often with a focus on environmental concerns and sustainability. The paper presented here thus aims to emphasize and justify the effectiveness of using selected Ecopoems, "The Peace of Wild Things" by Wendell Berry, "Fossil Fools" by Anne Layton-Bennet and "Earth Day" by Jane Yolen in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and Energy Security.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Energy Security, Ecopoetry, Role of Ecopoetry, Raising global awareness

1. Introduction

“Oh, the good green life is right for me, / The good green life sure holds the key, / Oh, the good green life can set you free / From polluting machinery. / If I leave a room, I shut the light, / Waste no energy, day or night. / Only use the water that I need, / No drop is spilled due to greed. / An electric toothbrush? Not for me. / I brush by hand...naturally. / And blow-dried hair? Another frill, / My breeze-dried hair fits the bill. /... What of bottles, cans or paper thing? / Into recycling bins I fling, / So they can be reused once more, / Not mar the land, pollute the shore. / I ride my bike most every day, / No dirty air gets in my way / No gas is burned, no fuel I waste, / I exercise, but not in haste. /...I plant my garden organically, / I never treat it chemically. / As waste goes on the compost heap, / a fertile garden I will keep. / Yes, my garden is a friendly place / To meet with wildlife, face to face. / I feed the birds and let them be, / They never will be harmed by me. /...So, is the good green life right for you? / I hope you try it; I really do. / The good green life may save the earth, / And nothing else could have more worth!”, these simple lines by Barbara Freedman De-Vito[\[6\]](#) presented in a rhyming story for children about living an environmentally-friendly lifestyle speak a lot about the vital issues of preserving the planet and Sustainable Development. The eco-consciousness that this simple yet enriching poem creates is just one of the innumerable contributions of literature in creating awareness among the readers about the importance of Sustainable Development, which is directly linked to the issue of Energy Security prevalent in the world. The paper presented here thus aims to emphasize and justify the effectiveness of using Ecopoetry in the realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Energy Security.

2. Sustainable Development Goals and its Importance

The term “Sustainable Development” was referred by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1983). It suggests that human beings should use the natural resources responsibly and in such a manner so as to meet the development needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generations.[\[1\]](#)

According to Kahle, L.R. and E.Gurel-Atay,[\[2\]](#) ‘sustainability’ is a process of living within the limits of available resources in such a way that it allows all living beings to continue to live forever like this. Only when the United Nation’s adoption of an 8-point “Millenium Development Goals” (MDGs) in the year 2000 could not be met within the 2015 deadline by many countries, the U.N had to meet in September 2015 to adopt the year 2030 agenda

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known as “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs) in order to guide the countries of the world and to fathom the achievement of those goals by the year 2030. There are 17 SDGs to be achieved by the different countries of the world, which are briefly stated below:

(i) No poverty (ii) Zero hunger (iii) Good health and well-being (iv) Quality education (v) Gender equality (vi) Clean water and sanitation (vii) Affordable and clean energy (viii) Decent work and economic growth (ix) Industry, innovation and infrastructure (x) Reduced inequalities (xi) Sustainable cities and communities (xii) Responsible consumption and production (xiii) Climate action (xiv) Life below water (xv) Life on land (xvi) Peace, justice and strong institutions (xvii) Partnerships for the goals [\[7\]](#).

Meeting these SDGs are crucial for a nation to be given the status of a developed nation.

3. What Is Energy Security?

Energy Security is “a condition where all citizens and businesses in a territory of a state have access to energy sources that satisfy their needs through the uninterrupted transfer and the energy prices are acceptable and can be estimated for the foreseeable future.” [\[3\]](#) There are also other factors of Energy Security like “efficiency, condition, and capacity of infrastructure and the security of transfer, production, and extraction systems.” [\[4\]](#)

Energy Security is one of the crucial aspects of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ (ASEAN’s) energy cooperation in achieving Sustainable Development. The ever-increasing demand for energy caused by economic expansion, population growth, new energy usage and growth in income has made Energy Security a pressing concern. That is why countries of the world have made it a goal that their economies function without disruptions in energy supply for the people. They are also thinking about and opting for alternate renewable energy sources for this purpose so as to reduce overdependence on energy sources like fossil fuels. When countries experience an interruption in the availability of energy sources and/or energy is unaffordable, it is known as Energy Insecurity.

4. Relationship Between SDGS And Energy Security

Energy security affects the functioning of countries politically, economically, and socially. It is an important factor in sustainable development efforts. Hence, countries are actively involved in assessing their energy systems for compatibility with SDGs by creating new

concepts for energy development. Diversifying energy sources with alternate renewable energy decreases dependence on volatile global markets and geopolitical instability related to fossil fuels.

The SDG 7 is dedicated to energy, 'Affordable and Clean Energy'. It aims to ensure access to affordable and clean energy for everyone. The access to energy is necessary for work, security, combating climate change, food production and increasing national incomes. Sustainable energy has the potential to transform human life, entire economies, and even the planet for the better.

5. Use Of Selected Ecopoetry In Promoting SDGs And Energy Security

William Somerset Maugham says, "The crown of literature is poetry." As a form of poetry, Ecopoetry explores the relationship between humans and the natural world, often with a focus on environmental concerns and sustainability. When we talk about sustainability, we can't certainly ignore the significance of Energy Security. Ecopoetry can help in the realization of these concepts and make individuals conscious and sensitive to these global issues as it highlights the interconnectedness of environmental sustainability, economic development, and social well-being, encouraging action towards a more sustainable future and can also explore the impacts of energy choices on ecosystems, communities, and global well-being.

McKay, S.[\[5\]](#) States, "success in using literature greatly depends upon a selection of text which will not be overly difficult on either a linguistic or conceptual level". Since the aim here is to promote the SDGs and also to bring a global awareness about Energy Security, the following selected **Ecopoems** may be put to use that deal with these issues:

- 1) "The Peace of Wild Things" by Wendell Berry
- 2) "Fossil Fools" by Anne Layton-Bennett
- 3) "Earth Day" by Jane Yolen

i. "The Peace of Wild Things" By Wendell Berry

Nature is the solace for man when his mind is troubled with thoughts of insecurities that torment and threaten his life or the lives of his kins as in the case of the poet when he writes, "When despair for the world grows in me / and I wake in the night at the least sound / in fear

of what my life and my children's lives may be, / I go and lie down where the wood drake/
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.”[8]

Though this poem was composed in 1968 by the American writer and environmental activist Wendell Berry when the era was marked by widespread social unrest in the United States with regard to protests against the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement and various counterculture movements, the central idea of the poem holds relevance and is therefore contemporary in a way as it talks about the restorative power of Nature as a refuge from human anxieties and despair, “I come into the peace of wild things / who do not tax their lives with forethought / of grief.”[8] Nature heals the troubled mind, the diseased mind, the panic-stricken. The poet experienced the same as he finally writes, “For a time / I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.”[8]

This poem becomes contemporary and can be interpreted as a powerful reflection of the SDGs, particularly those that are connected with environmental sustainability and well-being. For example, SDG 15 ‘Life on Land’ that highlights the value of wild things and their habitat and considers protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems to be equally important; SDG 3 ‘Good Health and Well-being’ that explores the therapeutic benefits of Nature for mental and emotional health; SDG 12 ‘Responsible Consumption and Production’ as the poem can be interpreted as one that advocates for mindful living and discourages the consumerist culture that contributes to environmental degradation, which is in a way related to the importance of Energy Security SDG 7 ‘Affordable and Clean Energy’ for all; SDG 11 ‘Sustainable Cities and Communities’ as the poem can be an inspiration to connect to Nature within the scope of urban environments where the idea of creating green spaces and promoting sustainable urban planning doesn’t seem to be far-fetched; SDG 13 ‘Climate Action’ as by giving importance to the interconnected nature of humans and the natural world, the poem indirectly supports the need for climate action to protect the ecosystems and alleviate climate change.

Reading and understanding this poem will undoubtedly foster eco-consciousness among readers and aid in a deeper understanding of the concepts of SDGs and Energy Security.

ii. "Fossil Fools" By Anne Layton-Bennet

The poem “Fossil Fools” by the freelance writer, journalist and environmental activist Anne Layton-Bennet, born in England but currently settled in Australia, is extremely relevant as far as the issues of SDGs and Economic Security are concerned. The poem advocates for

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responsible governance align with regard to using alternate renewable energy sources instead of complete focus on fossil fuels as the overuse of fossil fuels has already harmed our planet. The idea of sustainable energy use is echoed in the lines of the poem, “urgent action was needed, it had to be fast / this addiction to coal could no longer last / but the fossil fuel barons of gas and of coal / had the ears of the pollies—had captured their soul”, and “...not only them, our governments too / were wooed by the money / when really they knew / the world had moved on / that coal and gas mining / belonged in the past / it was time they were gone.”^[9]

The poet wakes us up from our stupor and states that it is high time now to shift our focus from the fossil fuels to other sustainable sources of energy. She criticizes the power hungry “dinosaurs” who “are decades behind / still bound to an industry that will shortly find / that pollution and poison, and corruption and greed / just wounds Mother Earth / only see how she bleeds.”^[9]

The poet critiques the political leaders of the age who proved themselves to be potential “Fossil Fools” without paying heed to the vital issues of SDGs and Energy Security; thus, leading the people to a state of Energy Insecurity. The poet writes, “the schoolkids knew that—/ their future looked bleak they refused to be silent / were determined to speak”^[9]—just like them, all must voice against the wrongs done to our planet and act with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals. The poem’s focus on multiple SDGs like SDG 13 ‘Climate Action’, SDG 15 ‘Life on Land’, SDG 12 ‘Responsible Consumption and Production’, SDG 16 ‘Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions’ and SDG 7 ‘Affordable and Clean Energy’ makes it a very suitable choice to bring global awareness among the readers about these issues.

iii. “Earth Day” By Jane Yolen

Jane Yolen, a much celebrated and prolific American writer, encapsulates the spirit of Sustainable Development in her poem “Earth Day” that highlights the interconnected nature of all life and the planet. The Earth Day is celebrated annually on April 22nd and reminds us of the importance of environmental preservation and sustainable living. Yolen’s poem reflects the same notion as she beautifully expresses the interconnectedness between humanity and the natural world. Just as our body parts constitute our whole body, Earth is an integral part of our existence, “I am the Earth. / And the Earth is me. / Each blade of grass, / Each honey tree, / Each bit of mud, / And stick and stone. / Is blood and muscle, / Skin and bone.”^[10] So, we must care for her and her natural components as both our well-being are

linked, “And just as I / Need every bit / Of me to make / My body fit, / So Earth needs / Grass and stone and tree, / And things that grow here / Naturally.”^[10] The poet urges us to protect and appreciate the natural resources of the planet and to realize that preservation of the planet is not just for her sake but for our own welfare too because we need to believe, “I am the Earth. / And the Earth is me.”^[10]

The poem wonderfully synchronizes the different SDGs and aids in realizing their significance, like SDG 15 ‘Life on Land’, SDG 3 ‘Good Health and Well-being’, SDG 6 ‘Clean Water and Sanitation’, SDG 13 ‘Climate Action’. The poem concludes by emphasizing on the collective nature of the Earth Day, “That’s why we / Celebrate this day.”^[10] This shared understanding that we must globally protect our planet aligns with SDG 17 ‘Partnerships for the Goals’ to bring Sustainable Development. According to Bhagoji (2024), graphic novels act as an embryonic tool that enhances second-language acquisition and prolific art while aligning educational outcomes with national sustainability frameworks.^[11] Research by Sopekan, Komolafe, and Okoroafor (2024) suggests that multisensory teaching strategies are more effective than traditional methods in developing foundational literacy skills among young learners.^[12] Though the poem does not directly mention Energy Security, its central idea about the mutual well-being of the people and the planet suggests that sustainable energy use is indispensable to preserve the planet. Employing an Eco-poem as this one for reading will certainly help in promoting the SDGs and make people more sensitive as they direct their actions towards the planet.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined a possible application of Eco-poetry using the selected literary works of the poets Wendell Berry, Anne Layton-Bennett and Jane Yolen. It has also justified how these Eco-poems will help in the realization of the concepts of Sustainable Development Goals and Energy Security in a better way. This global consciousness will help the readers to act responsibly in life and participate actively to protect and preserve the planet.

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